

# The Game of the Name

Search

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Tuesday, April 26, 2005

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Hello. Please allow me to introduce myself.  
My name is Mark Louis Gottlieb. (driver's license)  
My name is Mark L. Gottlieb (puzzle bylines)  
My name is Mark. (friends)  
My name is Mr. Gottlieb (nah, no it isn't)  
My name is Wombat. (National Puzzlers' League)  
My name is Doctor Wombat. (**Magic Online**)  
My name is Agrajag. (Starcraft)  
My name is Mago. (Message boards)

Mago. That name annoyed the hell out of me for months. I didn't consider it a legitimate nickname—it wasn't devised for me; it was the application of someone else's nickname structure (MARk ROsewater = Maro) to my name. It was thus derivative and had no intrinsic merit. Then, nearly a year ago, Garro Sagara knocked my socks off. He wrote to me to tell me that “mago” means “mage” in Spanish, and it shows up in a bunch of card names! What this means is that while Mark Rosewater has a few **Magic** cards with his nickname in their names (Maro; Multani, Maro-Sorcerer; Molimo, Maro-Sorcerer), I have more. My cards include Mago il-Vec (Mage il-Vec), Mago errante (Wandering Mage), Mago ígneo trasgo (Embermage Goblin), Mago alternativo astuto (Crafty Pathmage), and Mago dragón (Dragon Mage)—oh, but that's only if you stop at Spanish.

It turns out that Spanish doesn't tell the whole story. The creature type “Wizard” is translated as “Hechicero” in Spanish, so “Mago” only appears in titles as the translation of “Mage.” In both Italian and Portuguese, however, it's “Wizard” that's translated as “Mago.” I don't just show up in a bunch of names—including the Italian cards Arci Mago (Arc Mage) and Mago Combattente Spinologo (Thornscape Battlemage), and the Portuguese cards Mago da Guilda Armeira (Armorer Guildmage) and Mago Interferidor (Meddling Mage)—I show up on type lines and in rules text. The Italian Patron Wizard, for example, is a “Creatura—Mago,” and it lets you tap an untapped Mago you control to Force Spike a spell.

I work at a company named Wizards of the Coast, on a product named **Magic**, and my randomly-derived nickname means “wizard.” Names are powerful, meaningful, and mysterious.

## Uh, I Can't Think of a Name for this Section...

It should be no surprise that I love names. I'm a wordsmith, and I believe strongly in names as flavor, as mnemonics, as conveyers of meaning. I like naming the puzzle teams I play on. Throughout high school and college I enjoyed inventing names for my (imaginary) band and their (imaginary) albums—I'm completely musically inept, but I could dream. I'm responsible for the English names of all **Duel Masters** cards—about half of them are straight translations of their Japanese names, but the rest need to be shortened for space reasons, modified to match certain conventions, or wholly rewritten to make sense to American ears. Hopefully no one can tell which are which. I helped write **Magic** card names for *Odyssey*, *Torment*, *Judgment*, *Onslaught*, *Legions*, *Mirrodin*, and *Darksteel* before stopping in favor of writing this column. (Kudos to JMS for being able to do both; I find doing both tasks at once far too creatively taxing.)

Therefore, for Name Week, I thought I'd build some decks by choosing a word and then only using cards whose names (or maybe rules text or flavor text) contained that word... huh? Last week?

Auction of the People? Oh. On to Plan B...

## Plan B

Get other people to write decks for me! First up is an Urza's Hot Tub deck build by Fabio B. (He's the Plan B Fabio.) Urza's Hot Tub's mechanic is wholly based on card names, so this fits the theme of the week perfectly. There are two key words running through Fabio's deck.

### Word 1: Urza's.

Fabio's deck only runs 20 lands (though it has 4 Talismans and 4 Serum Powders) because it's got the Urzatron in it and, with an Urza's Hot Tub on the table, every single card in the deck except Serum Powder can act as a landcycler. Each Urzatron piece can fetch any other Urzatron piece, as can excess Urza's Hot Tubs.

### Word 2: Of.

Yeah, "of." Except for Serum Powder, every non-Urza's card in the deck has "of" in its name, and that includes the 12 other mana sources: Seat of the Synod, Vault of Whispers, and Talisman of Dominance. (That's how the rest of the cards act as landcyclers.) Once you've got enough mana out, it's time to choose either of two degenerate ways to win the game.

"Of" Path 1: Recur some Beacons. Play a Beacon of Tomorrows or Beacon of Unrest, get a nifty effect, and shuffle it back into your library. On your next turn, draw a card with "of" in its name, discard it to fetch a Beacon, then play the Beacon to either get another turn or to put a card from a graveyard into play—possibly the one you just discarded (but probably one you discarded earlier).

"Of" Path 2: Assemble Kaldra. The Kaldra pieces all fetch each other, and most other cards in the deck fetch them as well. It won't be hard to get all three pieces. Then start hitting with your 9/9, or combo it with Claws of Gix for an engine that says "2: Gain 1 life" or with Altar of Dementia for an engine that says "1: Mill 9 cards."

Early defense is provided by Wall of Junk, which thoughtfully jumps back to your hand so you can dunk it in the Hot Tub if you don't need it anymore. The Serum Powder is there to increase your odds of starting the game with a Hot Tub. The missing piece to the deck was a suitably gigantic creature you could pitch to the Hot Tub and reanimate—and wouldn't it be cool if any copies of that creature still in your library could damage your opponent each time you activated the Hot Tub? Fabio suggested Infernal Spawn of Infernal Spawn of Evil, and it's so perfect that I moved it into the main deck.

Tiny Bubbles

## Casual Urza's Hot Tub deck

### Something Sublime

Next up in the cavalcade of the weird is a modified version of a Prismatic deck I saw fooblizoo playing online. He was kind enough to send me his decklist, as well as a wishlist of cards that he'd add to the deck if he had them. Well, I'm fortunate enough to have all the cards online, so I optimized the deck as much as I could. This included fooblizoo's changes, as well as some modifications I thought would help it out once I started playing it. The concept of the deck and the grand majority of it is fooblizoo's (I'm going to type that name as much as I can); I can only take credit for some tuning.

And the tuning worked; somehow, I won my last 4 games with this deck before writing this. It can't compete against a high-level, tricked-out Prismatic deck, but it can hold its own against other casual

Prismatic decks. I give hearty props to fooblizoo (got it in again!) for having the guts, audacity, sense of humor, and creativity to pull this off. It's a thing of beauty.

See if you can figure out the theme.

Kick Some S

## Prismatic deck

The phenomenal thing is the *lands*. Most deckbuilders would take the easy way out and allow basic lands for free; surely basic lands don't need to follow the wacky constraint. Not fooblizoo. (One more!) Although the deck is overwhelmingly black, sometimes the color constraints hurt. Sometimes they hurt so good, like when I was so color hosed that I had to discard a Sakura-Tribe Springcaller... which allowed me to Strands of Night it into play, which gave me free green mana each turn so I could play my Sylvok Explorers. The Eggs, Shimmering Mirages, cycling cards, and morph creatures help as well. Amusingly, Solemn Simulacrum *doesn't* help, as all it can fetch are more Swamps.

The heart of the deck, if you can find it, is Salvaging Station. The deck is so loaded with artifact cantrips (12 Eggs, 4 Scrabbling Claws, and a couple of Spellbombs) that you can start to draw multiple cards a turn if you get things humming. Sure, it's no Honden of Seeing Winds... but that doesn't start with S, does it?

## Naughty, Naughty

OK, I'll make some decks too. First up is an amusing, but probably unplayable, deck built around the Seven Deadly Sins. I'll rattle them off:

**Pride:** Not many "Pride" cards around. Stir the Pride is reasonable, but I'll take the creature Pride of Lions.

**Lust:** A choice between Blood Lust and Wanderlust. Well, if I have an unstoppable damage source in the Lions, I'll take the +4/-4 spell.

**Gluttony:** Gluttonous Zombie. No other options.

**Greed:** Devouring Greed is useless without Spirits and Burden of Greed is useless. Greed itself is pretty compelling, but considering how expensive the creatures in this deck will turn out to be, I decided I needed Horn of Greed to help me keep playing lands.

**Wrath/Anger:** Lots of choices here, but most left when I decided not to use blue or white in the deck. Wrath of God would be really useful if the mana base could support it. Seething Anger and Uncontrollable Anger support the theme started by Blood Lust and the hard-to-block creatures, but giving those creatures haste seemed like an even better plan. Anger was the choice.

**Envy:** A tough one. No **Magic** cards with "envy," "envious," "jealous," or "jealousy" in their names. (Zealous Inquisitor would have made it in under the misspelling rule, but thankfully it didn't come to that.) After consulting a thesaurus, Covetous Dragon made it in.

**Sloth:** This nearly spelled doom for the deck... until I found Megatherium. If you just said "huh?" then you don't know that the megatherium (the animal, not the *Mercadian Masques* creature) is an extinct, elephant-sized giant ground sloth from the Ice Age (the eon, not the expansion). Really. I mean it. Sloth!

I filled out the deck with some more themed cards: Deadly Insect, Guiltfeeder, Wicked Pact. That still left me with a three-color deck with way too many 5-mana creatures. Oh well. No one said following the Seven Deadly Sins was the way to succeed in life. I took the easy way out and allowed myself to use *any* lands for free without meeting the theme constraint (artifact lands are necessary for the Covetous Dragon), and wound up with a kinky little theme deck.

Seven Deadly Sins

## **Casual theme deck**

### **Theme of Mystery**

The next deck was built the same way. Can you figure out its theme?

Deck of Cards

## **Casual theme deck**

[Click here to read an explanation.](#)

Until next week, have fun with names. Fooblizoo!  
Mark

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